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STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2012
TAGS: PREL PGOV ZI
SUBJECT: JONATHAN MOYO ON MUGABE AND SUCCESSION

REF: A) HARARE 795 B) PRETORIA 3075

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Glenn Warren under 1.4 b/d

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Summary
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¶1. (C) President Robert Mugabe has throat cancer and has been advised by his physician that campaigning will be dangerous to his health. At this point, Mugabe nevertheless intends to seek endorsement at a ZANU-PF Extraordinary Congress in December and run for election in March. He has stated his successor would be Emmerson Mnangagwa, and that he would step down after winning reelection. He has instructed ZANU-PF negotiators Patrick Chinimasa and Nicholas Goche to make concessions in the SADC talks, believing he can beat a fractured and weak MDC in a free and fair election and thereby gain legitimacy. The Congress could be problematic for Mugabe. Shut out of succession, the Mujuru faction is planning to deny Mugabe the ZANU-PF endorsement and put forward its own candidate. Meanwhile, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono are holding

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talks about establishing a third party to contest the election. End Summary.

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Mugabe Fights On
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¶2. (C) Long rumored, ZANU-PF has called an Extraordinary Congress for December. Jonathan Moyo told polecon chief September 16 that ZANU-PF was not required to call a

Congress; it could have held an annual conference to discuss ZANU-PF business. As First Secretary of the party, Mugabe would be the presumptive nominee. A Congress is the unique ZANU-PF proceeding to change the top candidates. Mugabe was convening the Congress, according to Moyo, to get a public endorsement of his candidacy, and to possibly replace Vice-President Joice Mujuru with Oppah Muchinguri, the Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender, and Community Development. (Note. Muchinguri is a strong Mugabe supporter; women, along with war veterans, have recently been his core constituency. End Note.) Moyo also told us that Mugabe had indicated within ZANU-PF that he would step down after winning reelection; his choice to succeed him was Emmerson Mnangagwa. (Moyo doubted he would voluntarily step down after winning reelection.) Mugabe was considering naming Mnangagwa Minister of State Security in place of Didymus Mutasa.

¶3. (C) Moyo said that in calling a Congress Mugabe was playing a dangerous game. While he might gain a strong endorsement from the party going into next year's election, the possibility existed he could be replaced as ZANU-PF's nominee. Facing defeat in the succession battle, the Mujuru faction was now mounting a challenge to Mugabe by attempting to garner support in the provinces in anticipation of the December Congress

¶4. (C) Moyo said Mugabe was determined to run for reelection against the advice of his physician. He had throat cancer; campaigning would be difficult and imperil his health.

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Mugabe's Motivation
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¶5. (C) Moyo said Mugabe was determined to leave office after being reelected--and not after having been defeated as was Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia. Further, he was aware of charges that he had stolen elections in the past. Therefore, he had instructed negotiators Chinimasa and Goche to make concessions to the MDC in the SADC negotiations in order to create conditions for a fair election. The CIO had informed him that the MDC was fractured and weak and that he could prevail in such an election. Winning under these conditions would give him the legitimacy and respect heretofore lacking.

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Uphill Struggle for the MDC
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¶6. (C) Given ZANU-PF structures on the village, district, and provincial levels, Moyo believed the MDC would have an uphill struggle, even in a fair election. The MDC would have no chance, unless it worked as a coalition.

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A Third Way
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¶7. (C) Talks about a "third way" (Ref B) have intensified over the last several months, averred Moyo. The MDC was weak--it would not even be able to field candidates in all local and parliamentary constituencies in the next elections--and anti-ZANU-PF politicians were looking for an alternative. Moyo said that MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai had been talking with Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono about a third party that Gono would lead as presidential candidate. Gono and Tsvangirai were from the same village and had maintained a relationship over the years. Moyo continued that Tsvangirai realized he could not win; his payback for backing Gono would be financial security and a position as elder statesman in the event of a Gono win.

¶8. (C) According to Moyo, the new party would be called the

"New Patriotic Front." Its core would be the existing MDC and disaffected ZANU-PF parliamentarians primarily drawn from the Mujuru faction.

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Comment
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¶9. (C) Moyo's assertion that Mugabe has throat cancer is an elaboration on Gono's indication to us (Ref A) that Mugabe's physician had advised him to step down for health reasons. Moyo and Gono are close, and it is possible that Moyo's information on this subject comes from Gono. While we can't confirm Moyo's claim, we have no reason to disbelieve it.

¶10. (C) The December Congress, and the weeks leading up to it, will be critical in determining the viability of an internal challenge to Mugabe. If Mugabe continues to exert his authority over ZANU-PF, however, a more likely challenge may be an MDC-Mujuru faction coalition. We question whether Gideon Gono would emerge as the standard bearer. He is widely seen--whether or not fairly--as responsible for Zimbabwe's disastrous economic policies and he has no natural constituency. This begs the question of who else could step forward as a third party leader.

¶11. (C) An unlikely scenario at this point in time is an MDC



electoral victory. Even in a relatively free and fair election, the MDC is confronted by internal divisions and country-wide ZANU-PF structures. With an expected SADC agreement leveling the playing field, the MDC would still need time to organize and campaign. Elections are scheduled in March. We have heard rumors Mugabe would let them slide until June in order to get his economic house in order before the elections, but it is questionable whether this delay would significantly benefit the MDC.

¶12. (C) While there are a number of different scenarios, the odds now are that Mugabe will win reelection next year. That said, the political situation is extremely fluid.

DHANANI